

Interview (#3) with Phil Schwind
in Eastham, Massachusetts

by Vivian Andrist
January 15, 1982

Q: Okay, Phil, I think we're on the air. Today you're going to talk about the Ancients of Eastham.

PS: The old-timers that we refer to as the Ancients.

Q: Okay, that's great. You're on your own, because I won't know who to ask you about. You just keep on a-going.

PS: Okay. Of the old-timers by generational standards, I remember George Clark and George Clark's store. That must have been in the early twenties, when I visited here from Quincy with my grandparents. I remember that I learned to swim when I was fourteen, and George was very much aghast when I wandered into his store in a bathing suit to pick up the family's mail.

There are many stories told about George. His store was on the southwest corner of where Samoset Road crosses what was the railroad tracks, what is now the bicycle trail, up there where the high tension poles-- where Ed Brown turns into his ranch.

He was a small man with white chin whiskers, and as I remember him, very feisty. He took no nonsense from anybody. He was

somewhat absentminded, as many of the stories about him tell. The first library in town-- my wife's history of the Eastham Library-- was upstairs in his store, that I remember was probably three stories high, for eighteen years. And he furnished free of charge the light and the heat for the library.

His store burned down about the time we moved to Eastham. I can't seem to find out when, but it was somewhere in the very early thirties. Dan Sparrow had bought it after George died. And Mrs. Lowe does very nicely by George Clark in her history of Eastham.

After he died, Addie Nickerson took over the post office job.

Incidentally, George Clark was one of many children. I knew only four in the family. He had another brother, Herbert, who survived him for a great many years. A sister Helen, who I remember quite well. And a brother, Ed Clark, from whom I bought the land that we have here. They were first cousins to my grandmother, Susan Foster Hatch, as most everybody else in the town was.

Across the tracks from George Clark's store, Cavalier Robbins was the stationmaster for the train, and, of course, in those days, when we first came here, when I first came here to town, we came by train. Cavalier Robbins, as I remember, was a tall, slender, very dignified gentleman. He lived over there at what is now the National Seashore. I remember him best at a meeting, a Town Meeting, when Foster Atwood got up and-- something that Cavalier had said, and Foster said, that's all a matter of damn poppycock. And Cavalier popped to his feet and he said, I object to profanity in Town Meeting. So Foster said, well, I withdraw the damn, but

it's still a lot of poppycock. That's the best I remember of Cavalier Robbins, but as a gentleman, certainly one of the old-time dignified gentlemen.

Foster was perhaps the most waste of talent we had in town. He was a very brilliant man. He had been Selectman, according to the Town Reports, before we came to town. He was rumored to be involved in the bootleg business. I am not about to go into that, because it's all hearsay. He ran against me as Shellfish Constable, because in those days Shellfish Constable was an elected office, it was not an appointive office. And he beat me by one questionable vote.

However, very shortly, before that year was out, he enlisted in the Coast Guard as a cook, and the Selectmen appointed me to fulfill his unexpired term. For the large sum of three hundred and fifty dollars a year.

The next year I was elected. That was in '38, if I remember rightly. But the next year I quit, because the Selectmen would not back me up on a matter of twenty arrests of Wellfleet fishermen fishing in Eastham, on Billingsgate Island clamming. Maurice Wiley said the reason was we didn't want to get into trouble with Wellfleet. So I quit.

After George Clark died, Addie Nickerson took over the post office and was postmistress for eighteen years. She was born Tamsen Adams Clark. Now Tamsen-- the spelling of Tamsen varies. It's T-a-m-s-e-n, T-a-m-s-o-n, or in one case T-a-m-z-i-n. However, everyone knew her as Addie Clark Nickerson. She was the daughter

of John and Tamsen Gill. The post office was in a little building-- since added to-- on the south side of Samoset Road between the railroad tracks, or the bike trail now, and Bridge Road. I can remember going up there and waiting for the down train in the evening for the mail. She had there too a small general store, where she sold staples such as bread-- and I don't remember what. A very small general store as well.

She moved from there to the ell in back of her own home on the southeast corner of the joining between Bridge Road and Samoset Road, in the house that Jack and Florence Wallace now live.

In the six weeks after we had moved here and I was still working, coming down weekends, Helen used to wheel our daughter Paula in a high wheel baby carriage up to the mail, because she hadn't a great deal else to do except work. And Cousin Addie filled her in on the genealogy. Helen takes very good shorthand, and many of the notes we have came from Addie Nickerson.

I don't remember when Addie died, but when she gave up the job of postmaster the post office was then moved to John Bernard Crosby's grocery store, which was on what is now the Windmill Green. The building has long since been removed, of course. Otis Barton and his wife Pal-- and goodness knows what her first name was I can't find out, but Pal Barton-- took over as postmistress. Then the Bartons built what is now Ed Brown's Superette. Moved across the road, across Samoset Road, and the post office for years was there, before it moved down to its present location. That building was built by Harvey Moore and Oscar Peirce.

The only other store at the time we came here was Will Forrest's store, which was where now the Whispering Pines Service Center is.

Now, it's kind of strange looking back on it, but what went north of here we know very little about. I know there was a thriving community in North Eastham and Brackett's store. But somehow we never got that way. We always went the other way.

Well, Will Forrest, when we first came to town, lived on Mill Road and what is now Mr. [Charles] Borgarello's Rock Shop. Then he moved up to a main road, across from what is now the Whispering Pines, is now a gin mill. I called Winnie Knowles this morning and I said, Winnie, I helped you-- I was mason's lump for you when you built the chimney in that house. What was the name of the original owner, as far as you know? And he said, well, it was Sarah Cobb's house. And thinking back on it, I remember it being called the Cobb house. He didn't know who owned it before Sarah Cobb.

Anyway, Al Stowell bought out Will Forrest, and Al was very active in keeping alive the Volunteer Firemen's Association, about which we spoke earlier. Al sold out to Fred Ullman, as Mrs. Lowe points out in her book, and moved to Florida, and as far as I know he's still alive somewhere in Florida.

At that time, in the late thirties and early forties, if you want anything other than the basics, you went to Orleans to buy it. You went to the Finast, the First National store. It was managed by Lester Quinn, who was the father of Bill Quinn, the famous author, and the rest of the Quinn boys. There was a whole bunch of them. He had the best cheese that you could buy. He used to season it in the cellar of the First National store, where Livingston's Drug

Store is now. Or you went to the A&P. Or you went to Ellis's Market on what is now called Cove Road. It's in my mind that used to be called Bake House Road, but apparently they've changed it. Or to Knowles's Bakery next door.

I can remember coming down with my grandparents on the down train and Almond Nickerson picking us up with his truck wagon and bringing our trunks and all our linen and all the rest of the paraphernalia that you had to take in those days to my grandmother's old place. And then the next day we would take the up train early in the morning and go to Orleans and do our shopping for the week. Or for two weeks or for however long we were here. And part of that was going for Knowles's Bakery and buying fig tarts or raspberry tarts, of which I was very fond. The pastry was wonderful. And then we came back that night on the down train. That afternoon, late in the afternoon, the down train, and would walk on home with all we had bought up there.

For hardware we went to the Smith boys. Smith boys, I love that, because they were as old as I. Alton, Carlton, and Roger. Roger went off eventually on his own in the heating and plumbing business. Alton and Carlton ran the business until very recently, and, of course, they sold out, and eventually the building burned down, some four or five or six years ago. This is now where the Tru-Value hardware store is. It was an antique three-story building. It was stocked from bottom to top with everything that you wanted to buy, from cast cement bird baths-- I've got one out here now in the front yard-- to milk screen filters for gas tanks, ropes,

gloves, bolts, nuts, nails, thousands of varieties. You name it, it was there if you could find it. There were times when we had to prowl around in the store to find what you wanted, but it was there for sure and it was always last year's prices rather than this year's prices.

Upstairs Lewis Eldridge held sway. Lewis is one of a kind. There'll never be another Lewis Eldridge. I don't know how many of us alongshore fishermen were kept working by Lewis. He had-- would do any kind of sheet metal work for you that you wanted, and he'd build a cap for your chimney. I remember one day when he soldered a gas tank, a sixty-five gallon gas tank, a third full of gasoline, outdoors. I hid behind a tree while he was soldering it. But whatever. His wife Beryl and he still live behind the Goose Hummock Shop in a little cottage down there. And Lewis would-- and I guess would today-- would still sell you a dozen pickled eel skins or striped bass bait, or if you had flounders that you don't know how to clean, he'll clean them for you, or he'll sell you a peck of clams or a bushel of quahogs, or if you want, he'll sell you a cord of hand-split wood.

As I say, his wife Beryl taught French when our daughter was in the Orleans High School.

Blacksmiths were very important in our fishing. We had to go to the blacksmith. You couldn't buy the equipment-- you can't today-- buy the equipment you need. It has to be handmade. And when we first came to town, Feltis-- I don't remember his first name-- had a blacksmith shop where Kim Schneider's Animal Hospital is now. Very shortly after we came to town, he went out of business.

Whether he died or whether he retired, I don't remember.

And so we went up to Alf Fulcher. Alf was a little man. Very feisty. Not the kind of man you'd think of as the big, brawny blacksmith, but a very, very small man. A wonderful blacksmith besides. And you could not push Alf. If you wanted something done, you took off your hat and you said, please, Mr. Fulcher, I would like this done.

I remember one day I was in there, he was repairing a rudder for me, from Sunshine. Again, see CAPE COD FISHERMAN. And an old-time friend of his, an iron salesman for iron work came in, and he was busy talking. He stopped my work. Busy talking with this man. And I knew better than to interrupt. And Gene Sprague came in. Now Gene Sprague was one of my grandfather's best friends. The father of Reggie Sprague, who started the Howard Johnson's stand at the junction of Route 6 and Route 28. Gene was a very pompous man, an ex-butcher. He owned two grocery markets in Wollaston, and he moved down here to the Cape. Moved back to the Cape. And he came in with a wooden garden rake that had a couple of iron braces on it. You may remember the kind of garden rake they used to use to rake the lawn. The iron braces were broken and he wanted Mr. Fulcher to fix them, and he stood around and he humphed and he hawed, and he finally said, Mr. Fulcher, Mr. Fulcher-- and Alf turned to him and he looked him up and down and he said, "Can't you see I'm busy talking?" And he was completely deflated.

But that was the way Alf was. He was busy talking, then you waited till he got through talking. Gene looked at me and left the rake for me to get repaired when Alf got through being busy

talking this way.

He had a number of children. Gene Fulcher, who was the captain of the Wild Duck from 1946 until last year, when his son took over. Again, see CAPE COD FISHERMAN. Doc, who I think was named Howard, I'm not sure. Lawrence, who drove a school bus for years for the Town of Orleans. And Richie, who at last report has just retired from sign painting for the National Park Service. These people, Richie and Gene, are still around in Orleans.

Well, Peter Bruce came to town as a blacksmith, and Alf was getting a little bit feisty and not all that happy about-- he was a man who was on in years, for sure, and not all that happy about his-- after Peter Bruce. And Peter was one of a kind. There was never a man like Peter. And as he was Scottish, he used to say, "I do not dr-r-r-ink and I do not smoke, but I like to p-r-r-reach a bit."

And on Sundays he went to the prisons-- God help the prisoners-- and preached.

He was absolutely-- the man was beyond belief. He could weld a cast iron grate from a kitchen stove, which you were not supposed to be able to do. He silver soldered a pair of my wife's candle snuffers. So fine that you can't find today-- we have the candle snuffers that he silver soldered-- you can't find it. The man could do anything that was to do with metal.

He fell off Roach's standard down there in North Eastham and broke-- what? Three or four ribs. It would have killed anybody but Peter. Came back. He was very irritated, because the doctor told him that he couldn't use over a four-pound hammer, which he

said wasn't more than big enough to crack walnuts with.

He eventually sold out to Ed Putnam, but he came back and until the last year or two ran a blacksmith shop over in Harwich somewheres. Ed Putnam came there, and then after Ed came our present blacksmith, Kathy and Bob Jordan, who now have the Eastham Cove Forge.

Q: Right up on Route 6?

PS: On Route 6, yes. We had the first lady Shellfish Constable in New England. Mary Dougert. And we now have, as far as I know, the first lady blacksmith. And she is very good with a four-pound hammer. She does a tremendous job with a four-pound hammer.

Now, from there, I think Abbott Knowles should not be forgotten. Abbott was again one of a kind. When we came to town, he was the-- this was up until the time when King Franklin the First instituted his giveaway programs. Abbott was the only Democrat in town. This was entirely a Republican town, except for Abbott Knowles. My grandmother used to say that you judged a man by his family, and Abbott should rate very, very high, because he has any number of very lovely children. My wife has laid them out. There was Abbott, Jr., who I think is gone. Lucy, now Hopkins. John Knowles. After that, I think Esther Knowles, who later married-- she was married to a Tibbels and later married Freddie Boo Turner, that I want to talk about before we get through. And then Paul and Wilton and Eleanor. I believe they had eight children all together. His wife, Flora Knowles, was Cavalier Robbins's stepdaughter and

she died in '75 at the age of 93. A lovely person. She and Helen corresponded right regularly. You know, sometimes your friends, you don't see them, but you get-- .

To go back to the people that we should remember. Lottie Fulcher just had her 90th birthday. She was the wife of Obed (probably Obadiah, I don't know), who died some years back. Obed Fulcher was a brother to John Fulcher, who was the first miller of record in town. Obed was a brother to Zeke Fulcher. Zeke Fulcher was the supervisor, or surveyor or foreman, when we did one of Franklin Roosevelt's make-work projects, put in Hemenway Road down to the landing. And Zeke had a five-foot hickory stick, or oak stick, and his thumb and his eyesight, and that was what made the grade when we made the road with a wheelbarrow.

But while we were working on that-- it went down, of course, through Red Maple Swamp. And I marveled to think about the fact that there were so many of these little swamp holes around. And Zeke said, well, of course, families would get together in the wintertime. There was no wood a hundred years ago. There were no trees on the Cape. It had been deforested, so to speak. And so families would get together-- the Fulcher family and the Doane family-- in the case of the Red Maple Swamp, and they would dike the swamp off and handpump it dry and cut peat. And he said, here in what is now called the Red Maple Swamp, there were six Doane brothers working on the project, as well as my family, and we uncovered a tree that was as yellow as butter. And the six Doane brothers took that one tree for their share of the wood that we took out of the swamp, and there was enough firewood in that one tree so that all six of the Doane brothers had firewood that next

year.

I must tell a story about John Fulcher. John was a very friendly man. Old, by our standards, when we came here. And he had a horse. Bud Rich and I hired John's horse to cultivate two acres of turnips, which we planted back of May Knowles's. And I knew very little about horses. I knew that they didn't do like an automobile did. They didn't go when you said go and they didn't stop. So we're cultivating the field and Bud is handling the harrow and I'm leading the horse between the rows. I think he should have led me, instead of my leading him.

But anyway, I turned over my shoulder and talked to Bud, and the horse stopped. And I said, come on, you silly thing, let's get up out of here. So we started up and I twist on the reins and I turn to Bud to say something again and the horse stopped.

Well, it seems that John had driven the horse and he liked to stop and talk to people, so that the horse knew that when the guy leading him stopped to talk, it was time for the horse to stop too.
(LAUGHTER)

Q: Smart horse.

PS: Horses, I found, were very smart people. They're much smarter than the people that ride them.

But anyway-- let me see, where were we?

Q: You were talking about the Knowles.

PS: Well, the peat holes. And many of the swamp holes that we have-- the little swamp holes that we have around here now-- were

made because they would dike off an area, pump it out, and dig peat. Freeman Hatch, my grandmother's brother-- Freeman the First, not the famous Captain Freeman who ran the clipper ship, because he had no direct descendants. But I think Freeman the First was Freeman Cobb Hatch. I think now they're Freeman Clark Hatch, the second, third, fourth. They've changed the middle name. But who built up there where Tim Bowman has his house now. Told me when I was really young that when they built that house in the early 1900's, you could see from that hill to the shore. There wasn't a tree between that house and the shore. Because they'd cut all the trees down.

Now let me get organized again. Okay. I think we should remember Freddie "Boo" Turner. He has many children living around here now, and they're all part of Freddie "Boo", as they should be, because Freddie was one of a kind. Where he got the name "Boo" I don't know. Brad Steele, who was his half-brother, used to say that when he first went to grammar school and the teacher asked him his name, he said, Freddie Wee-Wee Boo-Boo. Now whether that's where-- but everybody, even his grandchildren today, know him as Freddie Boo. And the man was unique. There are dozens of stories about Freddie Boo. I don't want to go into that.

But he was a half-brother of Brad Steele, of whom I wrote in the CAPE COD FISHERMAN. Half-brother also to Malcolm Steele, who was the barber that Phil Peterson now has married his granddaughter. Brad always claimed that his mother was a direct descendant from Abraham Lincoln. Brad used to stretch a story about as far as

you could do it without breaking it, but I expect that that's probably right. Bill Steele, his father-- and Mrs. Lowe has a picture of him in her history-- at 96 was still cutting hair. And Bill had his barbershop at the corner of Aspinet Road and Massasoit Road in the northeast corner.

Let me see who else I've got down here.

(TAPE INTERRUPTION)

Q: Okay. Now we were talking about Ed Rich, who didn't let his horse work on Sunday.

PS: Well, the stories of the old-timers came along-- I'm not sure that they're the absolute truth. But Ed Rich would rent you his horse. I hired the horse the year Peter was born. I had two acres of turnips up here in the field and I had to have a horse to cultivate. But Ed would not rent me the horse on Sunday, because he said the Lord said the people should rest on Sunday and that included horses.

Albion Rich, Deacon Rich, the father of the present Albion Rich, he got a Carnegie Medal. You should talk to Bud about his father. He got a Carnegie Medal for rescuing people in the winter-time. I'm not just sure of the circumstances. But he was very strict about Sundays. And this Bud has corroborated many times, he would take the roosters out of the hen yard on Sunday, because he didn't think the roosters and the hens should-- whatever they do on Sundays. However, it was all right for his wife and daughters to go out and cut asparagus on Sunday. That was a different story,

because the asparagus was growing and had to be cut.

Q: Albion Rich-- ?

PS: Albion Rich, Sr. Deacon Rich.

Q: What did he do? Was he a farmer or what?

PS: Yes, he was a farmer. Their place was-- he was a dairy farmer really. Their place was just beyond-- up on the knoll just beyond where the present Visitor's Center is. And when they came in, they took all that away. Bud now has a vegetable stand-- a cranberry stand and whatever down there on the Eastham-Wellfleet line. Bud went in the Marines. He was drafted about the same time I was. I got thrown out and Bud went in the Marines and came home from, I think, Guadalcanal, somewhere there, with wounds.

But the stories about Deacon Rich-- he was one of a kind. The old-timers were that way. They were right straight up and down, as Cavalier Robbins objected to profanity in Town Meeting. I remember in one Town Meeting, when Albion Rich-- Deacon Rich, as we called him-- had been a chairman of a committee to do some development down in the Kingsbury Beach-Thumpertown area, and it had proved to be a mistake. I think the town had appropriated like a thousand dollars. And Deacon Rich got up in Town Meeting and said, I'm sorry, we made a mistake, if the town feels that I should, I will give the town back the thousand dollars that we wasted on that development.

That sort of upright thinking. You don't see that any more. He was a man that so believed in his own judgment that he was

willing to put up money to prove what he said.

Q: You're right. They don't make them like that any more.

PS: That's for sure.

Q: Did you ever know or hear of any stories about Captain John Walker, Nat Walker's father-in-law?

PS: Well, Captain Walker was, of course, a very prominent figure in town. A retiring prominent figure, if you can put the two together. He was not a man to make a lot of noise.

Yes, we knew of Captain Abbott Walker. Yes. We knew of him. But he was never in our days very prominent in town affairs. But he was definitely-- like Captain Rob Sparrow that was so prominent in the Historical Society. I don't think Captain Rob Sparrow ever got credit for all he did for the Historical Society.

Q: I don't think he did either. I agree with you.

PS: Fred Jewell got credit. Bernard Collins got credit. But Captain Rob was-- I have a story to tell you about Captain Rob. He loved to dig clams, up till practically the year he died. But he didn't want little bitty two-inch clams. He wanted four and five-inch clams. And, of course, you have to go pretty deep for them, and I was Shellfish Constable at the time. And he went down to Station Bay, and I went down there one day, knowing that he had been digging there. And here is a tremendous hole. And I saw Captain Rob in the post office a couple of days later and I said, Captain Rob, when is the funeral? And he said, the funeral for what?

And I said, the horse that died. And he said, what horse are you talking about? And I said, well, the hole that you dug down there in Station Bay is big enough to bury a horse. (LAUGHTER)

But wherever I went along the shore, up until-- I don't know how old he must have been, he was well in his eighties-- wherever I went where there were big clams, three and four-inch softshell clams, Captain Rob had been there ahead of me and dug himself a hole.

(TAPE INTERRUPTION)

Q: Helen Schwind is going to correct some things in Phil's genealogy. I believe that's what you're doing, isn't it? In the Schwind genealogy. Okay, Helen, go ahead.

HS: We hadn't looked at the genealogy carefully enough, and when we did we were a little upset that we'd made so many mistakes.

Phil's grandfather was John Wendell Schwind. He was born April 6, 1826 in Worms, Germany. He died in Brooklyn, New York December 11, 1881.

His grandmother was married in Brooklyn, New York May 1, 1851, Margaretta Matzenbacher. She was born December 26, 1830 in Kusel, Rhinfels, Germany. Died in Everett, Mass. February 1, 1899.

John Wendell Schwind came to America in 1846. After he and Margaretta were married, they moved to New York. Three children were born to them there, and they returned to Brooklyn. John enrolled in the Union Army on October 29, 1861 at Williamsburg. I think that's Williamsburg, New York. He was a private in

Company E, 102nd Regiment, New York Infantry. He was honorably discharged January 22, 1863 on a surgeon's certificate of disability. We've always been told that he had been hit in one of his legs and this was the reason for his discharge.

After John's death in 1881, Margaretta moved to Everett, Massachusetts, where she resided with her four sons and one daughter until her death.

Phil's father was Frank George Schwind. He was born March the 12th, 1877 in Brooklyn, New York. He died in Wollaston, Mass. May 6th, 1908. Frank married in Wollaston, Massachusetts, December 31, 1905, Eugenia Maynard Hatch. Eugenia was born in Wollaston December 29th, 1877, daughter of Walter Maynard and Susan Foster Hatch.

Frank, before his marriage, was in the Army. He served in Troop M, Second U. S. Cavalry, in the Cuban War. He was in Cuba and then he was at Fort Sheridan in Illinois. Frank and Eugenia had one son, Philip.

Eugenia married Andrew Carver Merrill in Brewster, Massachusetts, November 4th, 1939. They lived in Eastham, Mass.

Phil's children are Paula Maynard, who was born December 29th, 1931 in Wollaston, Mass. She married Robert Randall Hylen June 18, 1955 in Boston, Mass. in the chapel at Northeastern University. Their marriage was the first marriage that had been performed in the new chapel.

Peter Hatch Schwind was born August the 1st, 1937 in Wollaston, Mass. He married Mary Elizabeth Doyle August 26th, 1961 in St. Theresa's church in West Roxbury, Mass.

Philip has six grandchildren. Andrea Lee Hylen, born October 8th, 1956 at the Naval Hospital at Camp Pendleton, California, where her father was in service as a Marine. She was married October 31st, 1981 to William M. Reddington. Joanne Elizabeth Hylen was born January 15th, 1959. Kenneth Randall was born January 12th, 1961 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He died in March 27th of that year. Robert Randall, Jr. was born May 16th, 1964 in Dallas, Texas. Oh, I forgot to say Joanne was born in San Mateo, California.

Suzanne Schwind was born-- our Peter's children-- February 21, 1963 at St. Margaret's Hospital in Dorchester, Mass. Carl McGregor was born June 23, 1965 at the same hospital. David McTaggart was born February 9th, 1970 at the same hospital.

And that's all.

Q: And that's it. Okay. I want to thank you both very, very much for a wonderful interview.

(END OF TAPE)